



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Advance Release to the PM's OF TUESDAY, JULY 2, 1946.

Field observers for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service are reporting that this spring's flight of ducks has been the poorest in many years, Albert M. Day, director of the Service, said today. Waterfowl populations are greatly reduced in all sections observed, particularly Canada, Mr. Day announced.

"This year the Service is making a wider coverage of the waterfowl breeding grounds than at any time in the past," said Mr. Day. "Two Service planes are now in Canada making extensive and intensive surveys of waterfowl abundance and distribution. We have added another waterfowl observer to our staff, Arthur Hawkins, who is assisting Robert H. Smith, Mississippi flyway biologist. We are making a greater effort to get more facts on nesting conditions in 1946 than we have ever had before."

Mr. Day cited one sample report made by Flyway Biologist Smith on June 14, from Delta, Manitoba, Canada. "I have covered areas that were heavy duck producers in 1942 and 1943", the report stated, "and even in 1945, but today the story is the same everywhere. The duck populations are greatly reduced. Some marshes and pot-holes that look ideal for ducks have none at all.

"In the light of what we have seen, and judging from reports from the West, I can only reiterate that in my opinion the situation is serious and drastic reductions in the kill are in order."

A spring report made by Albert Hochbaum, of the Delta Waterfowl Research Station in Canada, operated by the Wildlife Management Institute of Washington, D.C.

declared. "The spring flight was the poorest we have seen at Delta. The decrease in mallards and pintails was marked. There was no indication that lesser scaups had recovered from their deep drop of last spring. The breeding population is the lowest at Delta since the middle 1930's. It is considerably smaller than it was in 1938."

Mr. Hochbaum's report showed that no increase was recorded for any species; decreases were noted for mallards, pintails, blue-winged teals, redheads, and the lesser scaup. Species remaining about the same as last year were gadwalls, bladders, green-winged teals, shovellers, canvasbacks, and golden-eyes.

"The individual water areas which we have checked from year to year are greatly reduced in the number of birds they carry this year," the report continued. "For example, one small area which held 16 breeding pairs of the nine species in 1945, held but two breeding pairs this year--a pair of mallards and a pair of gadwalls. This in spite of the fact that water level, food, and nesting cover are unchanged on this spot. It is the same elsewhere in the marsh and in the bordering region. Numerous areas suited for breeding ducks are devoid of them this year. The marsh has never been so seriously under-populated."

The report concluded: "Considering the fact that the total breeding area is greatly reduced and the remaining waters are under-populated, it is clear that duck production in the Delta region will be the poorest in years."

C. J. Henry, manager of the Service's Lower Souris National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota, on the Mississippi flyway, reported to Director Day, "This spring's flight of ducks has been the poorest in the history of the refuge and there does not appear to be any local reason for the poor showing.

"Diving ducks were the only ones to appear in anything approaching normal numbers. There was a good flight of lesser scaups, probably about average, while the canvasbacks and redheads were only slightly below normal. Gadwalls and mallards were very scarce."

x x x